II ISTA
in Volterra, Italy, 5 August - 7 October 1981

Pre-Expressivity/Improvisation

Organiser
Roberto Bacci, Centro per la Sperimentazione e la Ricerca Teatrale, Pontedera, Italy

Presented by
Regione Toscana, Amministrazione Provinciale di Pisa and Comune di Volterra

Presentation

Pre-Expressivity/Improvisation

During the 2nd session of ISTA, there was a programme devoted to the study of improvisation in theatre. Improvisation is a word overly exploited today, which relates to many different and unconnected phenomena: from free creation on a theme to variation among already fixed elements, from mimetic play to the techniques of dramaturgical composition. It is a subject of fundamental importance, partly because it is a myth which permeates the history of modern performance, and also because it sets up conditions a set of experiences without which it would be impossible to understand correctly the development of theatre from the advent of mise en scène until today.

In order to broach this subject, ISTA has made a point of not defining stage improvisation in any way but deepening its multiple connotations. It will try not to dissolve it into a universal category which would make us lose sight of its concrete presence and its material effectiveness.

The research followed two directions: on the one hand, analyzed, confronted and collected a direct documentation about some of the most important experiences from East and West whose practice can be linked to improvisation; and, on the other, organized a series of demonstrations with Italian and foreign experts.

Eugenio Barba

Artistic Staff

Bali
I Made Pasek Tempo, dancer, musician
I Ketut Tutur, dancer, musician
I Gusti Nyoman Tantra, dancer, musician
I Wayan Lantir, dancer, musician
I Nyoman Punia, dancer, musician
Ni Made Putri, dancer, musician
I Made Terika, dancer, musician
Anak Agung Putra, dancer, musician
Ni Wayan Latri, dancer, musician
Ni Nyoman Suyasning, dancer, musician
INDIA
Sanjukta Panigrahi, dancer, Odissi
Raghunath Panigrahi, singer, musician
H. K. Das, musician
J. P. Varman, musician
Gangadar Pradhan, musician
G. Kishore Kumar, musician

JAPAN
Katsuko Azuma, dancer, Nihon Buyo
Mari Azuma, dancer, Nihon Buyo
Michi Imafuji, singer, musician
Shizuko Kineya, musician

ODIN TEATRET
Toni Cots, actor
Tage Larsen, actor

SCIENTIFIC STAFF
Fabrizio Cruciani, Italy
Peter Elsass, Denmark
Jean-Marie Pradier, France
Franco Ruffini, Italy
Nicola Savarese, Italy
Ferdinando Taviani, Italy
Ugo Volli, Italy

SPECIAL GUESTS
Clive Barker, Great Britain
César Brie, Argentina
Sergio Bini (Bustric), Italy
Gisela Cremer, Germany
Dario Fo, Italy
Richard Fowler, Canada
Jerzy Grotowski, Poland
Keith Johnstone, Canada
Henri Laborit, France
Ingemar Lindh, Sweden
Iben Nagel Rasmussen, Denmark / Odin Teatret
Kosuke Nomura, Japan
Pepe Robledo, Argentina
Moriaki Watanabe, Japan
REPORT

During the ISTA session, a two-day symposium (3-4 October 1981) on “Theatre and Anthropology”, led by Eugenio Barba, was held open to the public. It included work demonstrations by ISTA's artistic staff. ISTA presented 45 public performances by Balinese, Chinese, Indian and Japanese ensembles, 1 street performance by the participants and 1 Theatrum Mundi.

The following is an excerpt from the "Report on the 2nd Public Session of ISTA" by Peter Elsass, Copenhagen University Hospital, Jean-Marie Pradier, University of Rabat and Ferdinando Taviani, University of Lecce:

"Organisation: The participants can be classified according to four main groups: actors, directors, scientists and guests.
In order to maintain the specificity of each group, while at the same time not creating isolated units, the group of participants was divided into “families”, 3 in number. The particular qualities of the pedagogues gave a distinctive character to each “family”.

Family a)
Pedagogues: Sanjukta Panigrahi, India; Toni Cots, Spain/Odin Teatret; I Made Pasek Tempo, Bali.
Scholars: Ferdinando Taviani, University of Lecce; Ugo Volli, University of Bologna.

Family b)
Pedagogues: Ingemar Lindh, Sweden; Gisela Cremer, Germany; Michi Imafuji, Japan.
Scholars: Fabrizio Cruciani, University of Bologna; Franco Ruffini, University of Bologna.

Family c)
Pedagogues: Katsuko Azuma, Japan; Richard Fowler, Canada; Raghunath Panigrahi, India.
Scholars: Peter Elsass, Copenhagen University Hospital; Jean-Marie Pradier, University of Rabat.

Daily Schedule
06.10 - 06.25 Light meal;
06.25 - 06.55 Interaction (groups of 3 people going out running together);
07.05 - 09.30 “Family” training;
09.30 - 10.00 Breakfast;
10.30 - 13.00 “Gypsy time” (weekly workshops);
14.00 Lunch at the Conservatory;
15.30 Work in groups on “Hamlet” under the guidance of a director;
19.30 Dinner free of charge, in one of the 7 restaurants contracted by ISTA;
21.30 Demonstrations or performances or presentation of scientific and teaching films.

“Gypsy time” activities:
- mime;
- mask improvisation;
- various vocal training techniques;
- street performance techniques;
- Asian performing techniques;
- acrobatics.

Specialised activities:
For directors:
- dramaturgy;
- staging;
- problems relating to directing actors.

For actors:
- specific training in small groups;
- individual training under the guidance of an Asian master.

Dramaturgy and staging
The participants were divided into work groups. Each group was to prepare a performance based on an adaptation of Hamlet.
Each director responsible for a group was assisted by one or several dramaturgs - university professors - as well as other participants who were also directors but not themselves leading a group.
Eugenio Barba chose several actors who, between them, presented certain characteristic problems, with the objective of working on a production of the Edward Bond play Narrow Road to the Deep North. This work was open to observers: directors, guests, members of the scientific staff.

Scientific activities
Theatrical studies: improvisation;
Neurophysiology: examination of the actor's "presence";
Psycholinguistics: comparative study of the timbre of the actor's voice in a normal situation and in vocal improvisation;
Psychology: the question of non-verbal communication.